

**James Madison to Richard Henry Lee, July 7, 1785.
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TO R. H. LEE. MAD. MSS.

Orange July 7th, 1785.

Dear Sir, —Your favor of the 30th. of May came to hand yesterday only, having lain some time in Fredg and finally came to Orange via Albemarle. I agree perfectly with you in thinking it the interest of this Country to embrace the first decent opportunity of parting with Kentucky, and to refuse with firmness to part with any more of our settlements beyond the Allegheny.¹ It seems necessary however that this first instance of a voluntary dismemberment of a State should be conducted in such a manner as to form a salutary precedent. As it is an event which will indirectly affect the whole Confederacy, Congress ought clearly to be made a party to it, either immediately, or by a proviso that the partition act shall not take effect, till the actual admission of the new State into the Union. No interval whatever should be suffered between the release of our hold on that Country and its taking on itself the obligations of a member of the federal body. Should it be made a separate State without this precaution, it might possibly be

¹ “You may be surprised to hear that a late Convention have unanimously agreed to petition the assembly to have this District established into a State. I cannot explain the prevailing Sentiments better, than by telling you We conceive the people of this District do not at present enjoy a greater portion of Liberty than an American Colony might have done a few years ago had she been allowed a Representation in the British Parliament. . . . Until lately I have myself thought it would be more eligible to continue as we are a while longer;

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but finding that our Situation is too remote to enjoy the advantages of Government with Virginia in any tolerable degree, I have fallen in with the opinion that it is better to part in peace than to remain together in a state of Jealousy and Discontent.” Caleb Wallace to Madison, Lincoln Co, July 12, 1785. *Mad. MSS.*

tempted to remain so, as well with regard to the U. S. as to Virginia, by two considerations: 1. the evasion of its share of the general debt. 2. the allurements which an exemption from taxes, would prove to the Citizens of States groaning under them. It is very possible that such a policy might in the end prove a disadvantageous one, but the charms of ambition and of present interest, too often prevail against the cool remonstrances of true policy. May we not also with justice require that a reasonable portion of the particular debt of Virga should be assumed by that part of Virginia which is to set up for itself?

The arrival of Mr. Gardoqui will turn out I hope an auspicious step towards conciliating explanations & overtures with regard to the Mississippi. Besides the general motives for expediting an adjustment of this matter the prodigious effect of it on the sale of the back lands, makes it of peculiar importance. The same consideration presses for such arrangements with G. B. as will

give us speedy possession of the Western posts. As to the commercial arrangements which we wish from her, I own my expectations are far from being sanguine. In fact what could she get from us by concessions which she is unwilling to make, which she does not now enjoy? I cannot speak with certainty as to all the States, but sure I am that the trade of this was never more completely monopolized by her when it was under the direction of her own laws than it is at this moment. Our present situation therefore precisely verifies the doctrine held out in Deanes' intercepted letters. The revolution has robbed us of our trade with the West Indies the only one which yielded us a favorable balance, without opening any other channels to compensate for it. What makes the British monopoly the more mortifying is the abuse which they make of it. Not only the private planters who have resumed the practice of shipping their own Tobo, but many of the Merchants particularly

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the natives of the Country who have no connections with G. B. have recd accts of sales this season, which carry the most visible & shameful frauds in every article. In every point of view indeed the trade of this Country is in a deplorable Condition. A comparison of current prices here with those in the Northern States, either at this time or at any time since the peace, will shew that the loss direct on our produce & indirect on our imports is not less than 50 per ct. Till very lately the price of our Staple has been down at 32 & 33s. on James River & 28s. on Rappahannock. During the same period the former was selling in Philada, & I suppose in other Northern ports, at 44s. of this Currency, and the latter in proportion; tho' it cannot be denied that Tobo in the Northern ports is intrinsically worth less than it is here, being at the same distance from its ultimate market, & burdened with the freight from this to the other States. The price of merchandize here is at least as much above as that of Tobo is below the Northern standard.

We have had throughout the month of June & until this time, very hot and very wet weather. The effect of it on upland corn has been favorable but much the reverse on that of the flats. It has given full opportunity to the planters to pitch their crops of Tobo, but tho' many of them have repeated this operation several times the grasshoppers & other noxious insects have been so uncommonly troublesome that in many places the prospect is likely to be much abridged. Should this not be the case. the efforts of the Country must produce the greatest crop that has been seen since the peace. Our Wheat in this part of the Country is very indifferent. How it may be in others I cannot say, but believe the complaints are pretty general. With the highest esteem & regard I remain Dr. Sir,

Your obt. & very humble servt.